JLSC Journal of Librarianship and Scholarly Communication
(https://www.iastatedigitalpress.com/jlsc)

Practice Article

The Journal of Open Source Software (JOSS): Bringing Open-Source Software Practices to the Scholarly Publishing Community for Authors, Reviewers, Editors, and Publishers

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Abstract

Introduction: Open-source software (OSS) is a critical component of open science, but contributions to the OSS ecosystem are systematically undervalued in the current academic system. The Journal of Open Source Software (JOSS) contributes to addressing this by providing a venue (that is itself free, diamond open access, and all open-source, built in a layered structure using widely available elements/services of the scholarly publishing ecosystem) for publishing OSS, run in the style of OSS itself. A particularly distinctive element of JOSS is that it uses open peer review in a collaborative, iterative format, unlike most publishers. Additionally, all the components of the process—from the reviews to the papers to the software that is the subject of the papers to the software that the journal runs—are open.

Background: We describe JOSS's history and its peer review process using an editorial bot, and we present statistics gathered from JOSS's public review history on GitHub showing an increasing number of peer reviewed papers each year. We discuss the new JOSSCast and use it as a data source to understand reasons why interviewed authors decided to publish in JOSS.

Discussion and Outlook: JOSS's process differs significantly from traditional journals, which has impeded JOSS's inclusion in indexing services such as Web of Science. In turn, this discourages researchers within certain academic systems, such as Italy's, which emphasize the importance of Web of Science and/or Scopus indexing for grant applications and promotions. JOSS is a fully diamond open-access journal with a cost of around US$5 per paper for the 401 papers published in 2023. The scalability of running JOSS with volunteers and financing JOSS with grants and donations is discussed.

Keywords: open access, open peer review, open-source software, open science, open scholar

How to Cite:

Diehl, P., Soneson, C., Kurchin, R. C., Mounce, R. & Katz, D. S., (2025) "The Journal of Open Source Software (JOSS): Bringing Open-Source Software Practices to the Scholarly Publishing Community for Authors, Reviewers, Editors, and Publishers", *Journal of Librarianship and Scholarly Communication* 12(2). doi: https://doi.org/10.31274/jlsc.18285 (https://doi.org/10.31274/jlsc.18285)

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ISSUE

Volume 12 • Issue 2 • 2024 • Special Issue: Open Access: Diverse Experiences and Expectations (2024–25) (/jlsc/issue/1264/info/)

IDENTIFIERS

DOI: https://doi.org/10.31274/jlsc.18285 (https://doi.org/10.31274/jlsc.18285)

PUBLICATION DETAILS

Accepted on: 2024-10-30

FILE CHECKSUMS (MD5)

pdf: 126c939ef5c4746a7004b6dd470750a1

| ISSN: 2162-3309 | Published by Iowa State University Digital Press (https://press.lib.iastate.edu) |

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